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tian creed that Jesus was Messiah a statement with which Jesus himself did not agree and which is in every aspect inexplicable. The injunctions placed in the mouth of Jesus not to speak of his being Messiah are, when we consider the circumstances, quite natural. The messiahship was a perilous rôle, the announcement of it must have altered at once the tenor of his life and involved him in conflicts which, though he was prepared to enter on them when God gave him a signal, he could not desire to hasten. That the demoniacs addressed him as Messiah is not at all psychologically impossible. It was natural that his messiahship, like the kingdom he preached, should be in the meantime veiled and a mystery, to be alluded to in figure and parable and enigmatic title, but not to be declared in so many words, till the time came.

There can be no doubt that the discussion now going on as to the historical value of various parts of the gospel narrative will lead in time to an increase of light. Other grave questions are at present in dispute besides those noticed in this paper. Whether the fourth gospel contains a tradition of some facts of the life of Christ which is independent of that of the synoptists, and which may even be preferred to it, is a question by no means settled. Weiss holds to the views of his father, that at various points John is right and the synoptists wrong, or at least defective. The debate on the "Son of man" has had a long and varied history, and is not yet decided. From it we may hope that a clear understanding of the relation Jesus took up to the messiahship will one day be obtained. There is abundance of work to be done in this field by devoted and truth-seeking students. That it is work of the greatest importance for the world no one can question.

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IMMORTALITY.

THE question discussed by these books¹ is that of "the future life." If a man die, shall he live again? Does the individual human personality perish through and after that catastrophe of the body which we call dying?

¹ *The Other Room*. By LYMAN ABBOTT. New York: The Outlook Co., 1903. 120 pages.

Human Destiny in the Light of Revelation. By JOHN F. WEIR. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1903. xix + 186 pages.

A quite new interest has become attached to the question. For many Christian centuries it occupied attention little or not at all, because it was thought of as settled, closed, not lying within the field of examination. It was assumed that "man" was an order of beings set off sharply from all other creatures, chiefly by the endowment of each member of the race with an "immortal soul." Of course, if it were true that an immortal soul were part of the original equipment of every child of "man," the questions concerning a future life could only be such as: What kind of life will the soul live? Where will it live? What will its capacities and functions be? and such like.

Until lately the common thought within Christendom ran somewhat like this: Each human being is composed of a soul and a body. The soul is intrinsically immortal. The body is essentially perishable. The two coexist, much as a long-lived tenant occupies a poor and flimsily built house. Sooner or later, but certainly, the building falls into decay or is broken up by a catastrophe. When this occurs the tenant moves away. Where it flits to or how it maintains itself, while thus houseless, was never very clearly thought out or even imagined. The general notion in religious circles was, and for that matter is, that at the moment of death the soul and body separate; that the body slowly disintegrates; that the soul goes temporarily to a place of its own, where it endures in a sort of partial self-consciousness for a long but indefinite period; that at the end of a certain time each body which has ever served as the home of a human soul will be reconstituted, of the same matter, with member, joint, and limb restored; that each soul will be reunited to its own body; that then comes judgment, reward, and unchangeable doom.

Two postulates underlay all this way of thinking—postulates which have been taken for axioms. The first was: "The human soul is by its constitution immortal." The second was: "All human souls are alike in structure and possess the same quality of immortality." Both these postulates are now challenged. Indeed, it would be nearer the truth to say that they are both rejected as at least unprovable by the science of today. The soul is not by nature immortal, and all souls are not alike in this regard. It would take too long to tell the steps by which the thought of today has reached this conclusion. It has, moreover, reached it reluctantly, but it has reached it. The new sciences of biology and anthropology have claimed a right to speak upon this subject, which had theretofore been regarded as the peculiar possession of theology. Dr. Lyman Abbott is a theologian—at least he was

once. Forty years ago he would have written upon this theme, no doubt with the same charm and graciousness of spirit, but he would have derived his data from very different sources, and he would have used very different arguments from those which he employs today. Then he would have gone to the metaphysicians and the Bible. Now he goes to psychology and the analogies of nature. The essential belief which he holds upon the subject may be seen from a single paragraph :

If we are to pluck truth from the tree of life, we must have a right to it. If we would have a rational hope in life hereafter, we must have the immortal life here.

This is the substance of the whole matter. When Professor Weir's arguments are analyzed, they yield the same conclusion. Immortality is not a natural endowment, it is an achievement. This is also the original Christian teaching. But it is not the belief of the Christian world of today, and it has not been for thirteen hundred years. It was the message of the apostles who preached the "gospel of the resurrection." They spoke to a world of men in which the individual had no expectation of continuing in conscious identity after his death. When the ambassadors of the risen Christ brought the news that a man who had died was not only still living, but that he had uncovered the secret by which other men could do the same, they were listened to at first with incredulity and voted to be madmen. But when they brought such proof of their facts as convinced, they were hailed as the deliverers of the world and their story was instinctively characterized as the "Good News." It was good news, but it was news at all because it was new. They said to men everywhere: "Your life need not end with the breaking up of the body, if you really wish it otherwise. There is a way of escape. The way is not easy. It is a strait and narrow one. Comparatively few will find it. No one will find it unless he tries, tries ardently and persistently." St. Paul himself after years of preaching was by no means sure that he had compassed it. He did not count himself to have attained, but he was determined to go on in the endeavor, in confidence that he might by any means attain unto the resurrection of the dead. The zeal and enthusiasm of the early Christians can be accounted for and understood only when we remember that they believed themselves to be engaged in what was literally a life-and-death affair, not physical or even moral life, but to die, like the beasts, or to live, like Christ. This accounts at once for their zeal as missionaries and for their light-hearted martyrdom. It

was vastly different from the motif which has obtained since the Christian world fell back again into pagan Platonism and grew to believe that every human child is sure of immortality in any case, and that the only question is whether or not his endless life will be a blissful or a miserable one. The "orthodoxy" of today cannot make much out of the sober words of Athanasius:

Man is according to nature mortal, as a being who has been made out of things perishable. But on account of his likeness unto God he can by piety ward off and escape from his natural mortality and remain indestructible if he retain his knowledge of God, or can lose his incorruptibility if he lose his life in God.

Immortality is an achievement, not a natural endowment. This both Dr. Abbott and Professor Weir allow. But they both appear to shrink from the consequences of their belief. Dr. Abbott in gracious and winning terms sets about to reassure the affections of timid souls. In a very large measure he succeeds, partly because of the contagiousness of his fine spirit, and partly because the affections do not scrutinize logic. He assures them that they are needlessly terrified; that God and nature do all things gently and tenderly; that the "other life" is not some departure into an eternal exile in some far-away sphere, which frightens by its strangeness; that the other life, if it be at all, is already begun, and, the subject is living it now; that in God's spacious house are many rooms, and that death for him who is immortal is only like passing from one room of a friendly home into another. No doubt all he says is true; at least we may well believe it to be true; but it seems in some elusive way to avoid the whole tragic side of living and dying. It will not satisfy, will not console, and will probably exasperate the earnest man who stands face to face with the momentous question: "Can I live after death, and, if so, how?"

The issue at stake is really the most tragic which can possibly confront a conscious creature. The earnest man wants it settled, not tenderly pushed aside out of sight by pleasing reflections. Shall I live or not? If I pass finally out of conscious being, will it be through what must be for me the crowning tragedy, the dissolution of my body? Or may I pass on into still another doubtful stage in which death is still a possibility? Shall I in it attain to a fixed and stable existence? Or shall I there be liable to succumb, after possibly long, painful, and fruitless struggle, to the "second death"? The author of *The Other Room*, we venture to think, does not realize that the consolation, to be valuable to a man in this mind, must be quite different in kind from that addressed to one who accepts the belief in inherent immortality and

only seeks for future happiness. The way of life and the way of happiness are quite different. The means to secure a living are one thing; the means of securing pleasure and escaping pain are another. The author avows his belief in a contingent immortality, and then proceeds to speak as though his hearers were immortal of necessity. His arguments are gracious, cogent, uplifting. The question is: Are they relevant?

Professor Weir sets before himself a different task, and if he fails to achieve it, it is only because it is an impossible one. His aim, as he states it, is "to ascertain the destiny of man by the exclusive light of revelation." By revelation he means the Protestant Bible. He separates this authority sharply from all other means of attaining knowledge. "Science supplies no data whatever upon which a conclusion may rest concerning that which transcends the boundaries of earthly life; revelation alone supplies the key." The first half of his book is devoted to the exploitation of this thesis. Of this we can only say that the attempted delimitation of science and revelation is fatal to them both. Revelation is scientific; and science is revelation. To reach the truth upon this sober question one must use every hint, analogy, fact, and feeling which the natural universe can supply, and must fuse the result with the experiences and guesses of holy men recorded in Scripture. Professor Weir's deliberate separation of the two kinds of knowledge and the two kinds of psychological action does, as it seems to us, destroy the cogency of an argument which is learned and orderly, and which shows quite uncommon insight into some of the conditions of the question.

The truth of the matter would appear to be that the Christian world is not ready as yet to inquire seriously about the way of life. It is still controlled by the assumption that life immortal is in any case an essential quality of human personality. It has long been busying itself about the matter of future happiness and misery. It will not seriously take up the previous question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" until the mischievous assumption that eternal life passes by inheritance ceases to stand in the way. When that time comes—and it is coming swiftly—then all religious questions and activities will take on an earnest and real quality which will correspond to the tragic situation in the universe of beings who realize that they carry in their constitutions the possibilities of continuing in living or of perishing, swiftly or lingeringly, as the case may be.

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